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Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report describes the activities of the United Nations system in providing electoral assistance to Member States over the past two years. United Nations electoral assistance is provided only at the request of a Member State or on the basis of a resolution of the Security Council or the General Assembly. The report indicates that the demand from Member States for United Nations electoral assistance remains high. During the biennium, the United Nations assisted over 50 countries.

As the focal point for electoral assistance activities, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs is responsible for the Organization's electoral policy and for ensuring system-wide coherence and consistency in all United Nations electoral activities. In these tasks, he is supported by the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs, which also assists with the design and staffing of United Nations electoral activities and maintains both the roster of electoral experts and the Organization's electoral institutional memory.

In peacekeeping or post-conflict environments, electoral assistance is generally provided through components of field missions under the aegis of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or the Department of Political Affairs. The United Nations

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Development Programme (UNDP) usually plays a supporting role to electoral assistance mandates undertaken by field missions. UNDP is the Organization's major implementing body for support to electoral laws, processes and institutions outside the peacekeeping or post-conflict context.

A number of other United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes are also involved in the provision of electoral assistance, including the Department of Field Support, the United Nations Democracy Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Volunteers programme, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and the United Nations Office for Project Services.

The report highlights progress in the coordination of electoral assistance both within the Organization and with outside actors. The report also notes the various funding vehicles for electoral assistance and the need for Member State contributions.

It further notes work done by the Organization in the area of gender and elections. The United Nations continues to prioritize assistance to making election processes inclusive, with attention to ensuring that women and underrepresented groups are able to take part in the political life of their country. This increasingly includes advice on application of relevant provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, including, in particular, its provisions regarding temporary special measures.

The report notes that although the vast majority of the world's electoral processes are conducted peacefully, elections can on occasion trigger violence. Most often technical shortcomings are not the fundamental cause of violence, but merely the spark that ignites deeper-rooted social, economic or political tensions. To contain those risks, mediation and good offices, preferably in collaboration with regional or subregional organizations, can be made available upon request to supplement technical advice.

The report also deals with issues of sustainability and cost-effectiveness, calling for them to be central considerations in design and provision of electoral assistance, whether by the United Nations or other bodies. It urges Member States and donors to consider carefully the cost of elections, and of electoral assistance, in the light of other development needs.

The report notes an intention to prioritize in the next biennium the improvement of coherence, predictability and accountability in delivery of electoral assistance. Such efforts should be built upon the clear leadership role in all matters related to electoral assistance assigned by the General Assembly to the focal point for electoral assistance matters.

The report concludes with an emphasis on governance. Investments in elections will not yield sustainable peace and development without independent and professional judiciaries, open, pluralistic media, a robust civil society, a credible government and effective governance at all levels.

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in conformity with General Assembly resolution 64/155 and covers electoral activities undertaken by the United Nations since the previous report on this subject (A/64/304).

2. It has been 20 years since the first report to the General Assembly on the Organization's work on supporting elections. Looking back, it is difficult to identify a moment when the desire for genuinely and credibly elected leadership was expressed more dramatically than it was in 2011. The events which began in Tunisia and continue to unfold in the Middle East and North Africa seem to embody the provision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "the will of the people shall be the basis of authority of government [and that] this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures".

3. Regrettably, the reporting period has also seen elections — including some supported by the United Nations — act as a spark to ignite deep-seated grievances, leading to violence and loss of lives.

4. The present report provides an opportunity to both reflect on how the United Nations can best assist those Member States which have new electoral needs and aspirations, and how it can best assist in preventing or mitigating electoral-related conflict and violence.

5. United Nations electoral assistance can be provided to a Member State only upon request and/or a mandate from the Security Council or General Assembly. United Nations electoral assistance is provided in conformity with the principle of the sovereign equality of States and the realization that there is no single electoral methodology or system that is appropriate for all countries. Therefore, a needs assessment is always carried out before any electoral assistance is agreed or provided in order to ensure the assistance is tailored to the specific needs of the situation.

6. The United Nations today is able to provide the following five basic types of electoral assistance, the first two of which require a General Assembly or Security Council mandate, and are now rarely utilized: (a) organization and conduct of elections; (b) verification/certification; (c) technical assistance; (d) expert panels; and (e) coordination of international observers.

7. The United Nations has not observed an election since 2001 (Fiji); in contrast, many regional organizations are prioritizing this activity. Today, most United Nations electoral support consists of some type of technical assistance. In recent years, the United Nations has twice been asked to undertake certification of an election. This mandate requires the Organization to verify publicly that various stages of an electoral process are credible and that they conform to that country's national laws and international commitments on elections. Certification mandates are rare and require a Security Council or General Assembly mandate. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations peacekeeping mission has a certification mandate that had its genesis in relevant peace agreements before being included in a Security Council resolution (see also para. 42 below).

8. During the reporting period, the United Nations provided electoral assistance to more than 50 Member States (see annex II), 11 of them on the basis of a Security

Council mandate. Selected examples of electoral assistance are listed in annex I to the present report.

9. The present report summarizes the work of the United Nations departments, funds, programmes and agencies regarding electoral assistance during the reporting period and discusses cooperation within and outside the United Nations system. It further makes a number of observations aimed at strengthening the provision of electoral assistance by the United Nations system.

II. United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period

A. Mandates and activities

10. United Nations assistance to Member States in conducting credible, periodic and genuine elections continues to be a system-wide endeavour. The United Nations institutional framework benefits from relatively clear mandates from the General Assembly. The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs is the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance matters (hereinafter the focal point), with a mandate under Assembly resolution 64/155 to ensure coordination and coherence and avoid duplication of United Nations electoral assistance. The focal point is also charged by the Assembly with the development and dissemination of electoral policies, building and maintaining the Organization's electoral institutional memory, and maintaining a diverse roster of pre-screened electoral experts who can be quickly deployed to any United Nations assistance project.

11. The focal point is supported in these functions by the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs. The Division conducts all electoral needs assessments for the Organization, recommends to the focal point the parameters for all United Nations electoral assistance and advises on the design of all United Nations electoral projects. It provides, on behalf of the focal point, ongoing political and technical guidance to all United Nations entities involved in electoral assistance, including on the Organization's normative framework and best practices gleaned from the Organization's electoral institutional memory. In its resolution 63/261 on strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs, the General Assembly approved a total of eight new core posts (4 Professional and 4 General Service) and one post reclassification for the Electoral Assistance Division. These posts are now filled, and have greatly strengthened the ability of the Department to carry out its electoral mandate.

12. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the Organization's major implementing body for support to developing electoral laws, processes and institutions outside the peacekeeping or post-conflict context. In its resolution 64/155, the General Assembly requested UNDP to continue its democratic governance assistance programmes, in particular those that promote the strengthening of democratic institutions and linkages between civil society and Governments.

13. In peacekeeping or post-conflict environments, electoral assistance is generally provided through components of field missions under the aegis of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or the Department of Political Affairs. With

the trend towards integrated United Nations efforts, UNDP is increasingly providing support to electoral assistance mandates undertaken by field missions under the aegis of the two Departments. The Electoral Assistance Division provides political and technical guidance to the electoral components of such field missions.

14. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continues to provide training and advice on human rights monitoring in the context of elections, support and organization of campaigns for violence-free elections, engage in advocacy for human rights-compliant electoral laws and institutions and monitor and report on human rights violations during electoral processes. Since July 2010, the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, acting as the OHCHR regional office for Central Africa, has carried out capacity-building activities for various actors on the promotion of human rights and democracy during electoral periods.

15. Other parts of the United Nations system involved in election-related activities include: the Department of Field Support, which is primarily responsible for providing logistics, procurement, human resources and financial administration support to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs; the United Nations Office for Project Services, which provides support to electoral activities, largely in post-conflict/peacekeeping environments, in partnership with the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNDP and Member States; the United Nations Volunteers programme, which provides electoral staff to work in UNDP, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs field operations; the United Nations Fund for Democracy, which funds democracy-related civil society projects; and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), which provides technical expertise, on request, to institutional stakeholders to ensure that gender equality and women's rights and participation are adequately addressed and promotes coherence in such technical support.

B. Cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system

16. As I noted in my previous report (A/64/304), although the multiplicity of actors involved in electoral assistance within the United Nations system remains a strength, pressures from within and outside the system can create incentive for disharmony and overlap. In its resolution 64/155, the General Assembly reiterated the importance of reinforced coordination within the United Nations system and reaffirmed the role of the focal point in ensuring system-wide coherence, including by strengthening institutional memory and the development and dissemination of electoral policies.

17. I have therefore made efforts to promote coherence, predictability and accountability of United Nations electoral assistance a priority during the reporting period. To that end, since my previous report:

(a) In September 2010, UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs signed a revised note of guidance on electoral assistance[1] (revising the previous note, see A/56/344, annex II). The note helps to clarify roles and responsibilities so that the two entities can work better together;

(b) I have asked the Department of Field Support and the Department of Management to convene a system-wide discussion on operational arrangements, including recruitment and procurement, to see how procedures that are more flexible and efficient, while ensuring necessary safeguards and controls, could potentially be utilized in electoral activities;

(c) I have asked the Department of Management, the Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs to develop means of ensuring that the General Assembly-mandated electoral roster remains a resource for all United Nations electoral assistance projects, in conformity with new human resources rules (see ST/AI/2010/3), by ensuring the interoperability of the roster clearance and recruitment procedures with those of all agencies and programmes;

(d) I have asked the Department of Political Affairs, with UNDP and in consultation with all relevant partners, to develop plans to enhance production of system-wide policy and best practices documents and to implement the election-related recommendations contained in my 2010 report on women's participation in peacebuilding (A/65/354-S/2010/466);

(e) I have requested the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, as the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance, to facilitate discussions to more clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of United Nations departments, funds and agencies, in accordance with their mandates as defined by the General Assembly, and appropriate United Nations bodies.

18. The Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism for Electoral Assistance, chaired by the Electoral Assistance Division, was established in 2009 under the auspices of the focal point to promote information-sharing and further harmonization of the Organization's electoral work. It holds monthly meetings, and is also the forum for coordinating the follow-up to my requests above.

C. Cooperation with other organizations

19. In the reporting period, the United Nations has continued to enhance cooperation with other international, governmental and non-governmental organizations, both in the field and at Headquarters level, with a view to strengthening the delivery of electoral assistance.

20. The increasing multiplicity of assistance providers outside the United Nations system has enriched the knowledge pool and opened new opportunities, including for greater South-South cooperation. The United Nations often supports and facilitates these exchanges.

[1] The September 2010 note of guidance is available in all the official languages of the Organization. For copies, please contact the Electoral Assistance Division at electoralsec@un.org. An English-language copy is available on the UNDP website: see http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/html.

21. The United Nations continues to be a partner in two global tools that promote capacity-building and institutional memory in electoral knowledge: the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network and the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) project. The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network includes the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Elections Canada, the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, Instituto Federal Electoral-Mexico, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, UNDP, the Electoral Assistance Division and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The ACE Network provides comprehensive and authoritative information on elections, promotes networking among election-related professionals and offers capacity-development services for electoral management bodies and others. The second electoral knowledge tool, the BRIDGE project, is a partnership of the Australian Electoral Commission, International IDEA, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP. The purpose of the partnership is to develop, implement and maintain a comprehensive curriculum on effective administration of electoral processes, and provide modular training packages for electoral management bodies.

22. The United Nations, through UN-Women and UNDP, is also a partner in the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW), an innovative global platform that uses the exchange of information and networking to promote women's increased role and presence in political processes around the world. Partners also include the Inter-Parliamentary Union, International IDEA and the National Democratic Institute.

23. In 2010, the Kofi Annan Foundation and International IDEA created the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security. It is a high-level panel aimed at providing realistic policy recommendations on how to better deal with challenges to the integrity of elections and to the integrity of international electoral assistance. The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in his capacity as focal point, and the UNDP Administrator participate as Friends of the Commission.

24. A Framework for Cooperation between the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Department of Political Affairs, on behalf of the United Nations Secretariat was signed on 21 September 2010. It provides that the Department shall support the strengthening of the SADC electoral capacity, along with cooperation in mediation and the exchange of lessons learned. The United Nations also continues to work on electoral issues in collaboration with regional intergovernmental organizations including the African Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and many others. I particularly hope to promote further organizational cooperation in the electoral field with the League of Arab States. That cooperation will be particularly important given the rapid developments being seen in the Middle East and North Africa.

25. The European Union and UNDP have developed a strong partnership in electoral assistance over the last seven years. UNDP continues to deliver a significant part of its electoral assistance activities within the formal framework of a partnership with the European Union. In addition to joint projects at the country level, the partnership hosted a number of workshops, including on elections and violence and the use of technology in electoral processes.

26. The United Nations also works with individual Member States on various electoral issues. To name just one, in June 2010, the Electoral Assistance Division

and UNDP, in conjunction with the Government of Romania, organized a workshop on out-of-country voting, attended by representatives of approximately 30 Member States, the European Union, International IDEA, OSCE, and the Association of Central and Eastern European Electoral Officials, as well as members of the United Nations system. I encourage Member States to endorse the key conclusions of the workshop, including that host countries should consider how they can best facilitate and support out-of-country voting on their territories, and that regional organizations could consider developing a set of good practices or guidelines to assist host countries in doing so.

27. Although the United Nations rarely observes elections, the Electoral Assistance Division continues to participate in discussions to further enhance performance of electoral observers, through adherence to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. That document, launched at the United Nations in 2005, aims to harmonize the methodologies of the many intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in observing elections, including those practices which guarantee respect for national sovereignty. The more than 40 signatories now include the vast majority of recognized and respected actors in the field. I encourage others to join the broad consensus which has emerged around the globe regarding these principles.

III. Gender and elections

28. The United Nations continues to prioritize assistance to making election processes inclusive, with attention to ensuring that women and underrepresented groups are able to take part in the political life of their country.

29. This increasingly includes advice on the application of relevant provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, including, in particular, its provisions regarding temporary special measures. The United Nations advocates the inclusion of women in electoral management bodies and encourages and supports efforts by national authorities to include a gender perspective in their electoral laws and regulations. The Organization has contributed to targeted outreach attempts to mobilize women's participation in elections, both as voters and candidates. Special attention has been also accorded to women among internally displaced populations and to women's access to electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

30. To ensure continued gender mainstreaming in United Nations electoral assistance, the focal point now requires that every electoral needs assessment carried out in response to a request from a Member State includes specific attention to the issue of women's representation. In addition, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Field Support, UN-Women and UNDP are revising the "DPKO/DFS-DPA Joint Guidelines on Enhancing the Role of Women in Post-Conflict Electoral Processes", with input from field missions that have used the existing guidelines and using their suggestions for improvement.

IV. United Nations resources for electoral assistance

31. The regular budget of the Electoral Assistance Division covers its core staff costs, while extrabudgetary funds, including the Trust Fund in Support of Political Affairs and the Rapid Response Trust Fund, are also utilized. Electoral assistance projects managed by UNDP country offices are typically funded through voluntary contributions by Member States that often result in multi-partner basket funds, which include national counterparts in the management structure in order to ensure greater national ownership. In integrated peace operations with an electoral component, the peace operations budget covers some of the electoral work, while the balance, often quite substantial, is funded through UNDP multi-donor funding mechanisms. The Peacebuilding Support Office has occasionally utilized its Peacebuilding Fund to provide support when a lack of funding could have put at risk the organization of elections. With core funds and through its Fund for Gender Equality, UN-Women provides complementary funding for gender and elections work, closely aligned to, or integrated in, UNDP-managed electoral assistance projects.

32. Since mid-2009, UNDP has been implementing a Global Programme on Electoral Cycle Support, which strengthens the UNDP practice architecture by, inter alia, developing knowledge products, mainstreaming gender issues into electoral programming and supporting regional and country-level initiatives to strengthen electoral institutions and processes. The Global Programme initiative draws from a dedicated funding source (the Government of Spain, with a contribution from the Government of Canada) and full time advisers to help implement its activities. It is directly executed by the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, under a Steering Committee consisting of UNDP and representatives of the two donor countries.

33. The United Nations Democracy Fund provides financial support for projects that strengthen the voice of civil society, promote human rights and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes, including many projects aimed at building capacity among voters and candidates, training and supporting civil society observers and ensuring wide democratic engagement and participation, including the ACE project. To date, contributions of more than $110 million have been received from over 39 countries, and a further 64 projects were recently approved by me in the fifth funding round.

34. The Trust Fund in Support of Political Affairs, administered by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, along with the UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund, remain important sources of critical extrabudgetary funding for electoral assistance activities. Such funds allow the implementation of rapid response and innovative or catalytic projects and programmes, including those aimed at the prevention of conflict and at supporting the participation of women and underrepresented groups in political processes. Extrabudgetary funds were used during the reporting period to rapidly establish activities, inter alia, in Haiti, Guinea, the Niger and Kyrgyzstan (for further details, see annex I).

V. Elections and violence

35. In my previous two reports, I expressed concern over the potential for elections to be overshadowed by political discord or violence, especially after results are announced.

36. Such violence can be triggered by electoral shortcomings, such as severely flawed voter lists, the misuse of incumbency, a lack of transparency or the actual or perceived bias of election officials, which can result in real or perceived fraud. However, most often technical shortcomings are not the fundamental cause of violence or violent conflict, but merely the spark that ignites deeper-rooted social, economic or political tensions. Thus, if underlying political conditions are not conducive to confidence among stakeholders, or simply if one of the candidates refuses to accept credible results, elections can be a trigger for violence.

37. We must of course keep the problem in context. The vast majority of the world's elections are conducted peacefully, even though electoral controversy is not uncommon, especially when results are close. In general, such controversy is resolved peacefully by political processes or State institutions. However, where State institutions or political processes do not contain, or, at worst, exacerbate controversy, the result can be violence, death and displacement, with possible broader implications for peace and security.

38. During the biennium, the United Nations took several specific measures to prevent or mitigate violent conflict related to elections. I will mention two cases: Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

39. In Guinea, following the death of President Lansana Conté and a coup d'état in 2008, the adoption of the Ouagadougou Accord of 15 January 2010 set the stage for presidential elections on 27 June 2010, followed by a second round on 19 September 2010. These were the first democratic elections in almost 40 years, for a very diverse population during a complicated transition. The United Nations provided technical support to the process through a UNDP project, and also provided political and diplomatic support, within the framework of the International Contact Group on Guinea, co-chaired by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

40. On the eve of both rounds of elections, the Deputy Director of the Electoral Assistance Division was deployed to support to the UNDP team on the ground. When a last-minute request for funding for security for the elections was presented by the Government, the Peacebuilding Support Office managed to assess the request and release the necessary funding from the Peacebuilding Fund in record time. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) provided logistics support on very short notice. In addition, the newly established OHCHR office in Guinea monitored the human rights situation before, during and after the elections, which increased trust and confidence in the process.

41. My Special Representative for West Africa worked closely and intensively with the African Union and ECOWAS during the transition, visiting the country together with envoys of the African Union and ECOWAS more than 20 times, with the support of a United Nations senior mediation adviser specially deployed to Conakry. In the end, despite close results and some political controversy, Alpha Condé was elected President in a largely peaceful process. Among the critical

factors were the appointment of an election commission chairperson who enjoyed trust of the two contestants in the second round, and the statesmanlike acceptance of the final results by runner-up Cellou Dalein Diallo.

42. In Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations mandate to certify elections was based on the 2005 Pretoria Accord and the subsequent decision of the Security Council (resolution 1765 (2007)). The conditions for certification, developed by the United Nations pursuant to the 2007 Ouagadougou Political Agreement, in consultation with the Facilitator of the inter-Ivorian dialogue, President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, and the Ivorian parties, included: restoration of peace across the country; an inclusive political process; equal access to the State media; the establishment of objective electoral lists; and fair and unbiased poll results. The first round of presidential elections was held on 31 October 2010, with a second round on 28 November 2010. On 3 December 2010, my Special Representative certified that the fair and unbiased result of the second round was, as announced by the Independent Electoral Commission on 2 December, the victory of Alassane Ouattara.

43. As we know, the refusal of the incumbent to accept the result led, regrettably, to violent conflict and tragic loss of life. Yet the certification provided a consensus basis for diplomatic action, including by ECOWAS, to ensure that the democratically expressed will of the Ivorian people was respected. Although diplomacy did not prevent violence in this case, the legitimate President is now in office, and the United Nations continues to support the Government in addressing key challenges with a view to establishing lasting peace and stability.

44. The obvious contrast between the violent outcome in Côte d'Ivoire and the largely peaceful outcome in Guinea was the refusal of the runner-up, despite urging from the United Nations and other parties, to accept the legitimate outcome.

45. In the aftermath of these two events, my Special Representative in West Africa and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) organized a regional conference on elections and stability in West Africa, in May 2011 in Praia, Cape Verde. The conference was hosted by the Government of Cape Verde and organized in partnership with the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP. It received the support of ECOWAS, the African Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the European Union and the International Peace Institute. The resulting Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa, adopted on 20 May 2011, identified practical recommendations to facilitate the conduct of peaceful elections, including: further encouraging the United Nations-ECOWAS-African Union partnership in conflict prevention; strengthening cooperation between UNOWA, OHCHR, ECOWAS and Governments in developing a regional capacity-building programme in electoral affairs; and establishing early warning mechanisms. In a press statement on 8 July 2011, the Security Council welcomed the adoption of the Praia Declaration and encouraged all relevant actors to follow up on its recommendations.

46. Also during the biennium, the Electoral Assistance Division participated on behalf of the Secretariat, as a technical resource during deliberations of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to help design an IPU framework to address electoral-related violence. The resulting resolution on providing a sound legislative framework aimed at preventing electoral violence, improving electoral monitoring and ensuring the smooth transition of power was adopted by consensus at the 124th

IPU assembly on 20 April 2011. The resolution calls, inter alia, for greater cooperation between the United Nations and IPU in the prevention of electoral violence, and in ensuring a smooth and peaceful transition of political power, as well as in the implementation throughout the electoral cycle of relevant recommendations made by electoral observation missions.

47. The United Nations took other measures during the biennium to help to prevent violent conflict related to elections. One example is the Sudan, where the Secretary-General established, at the request of the authorities, a Panel on the Southern Sudan Referenda, to monitor the process and offer good offices to help resolve political discord during the referendum. In addition to consulting closely with the leadership in the North and South, the Panel worked in coordination with the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and the African Union mediation process, as well as concerned Member States. Substantial electoral technical assistance was also provided by UNMIS and UNDP under an integrated structure. The referendum was held peacefully and its results were accepted by both sides and by the international community. South Sudan became an independent country on 9 July 2011.

VI. Sustainability

48. Well-run elections are a crucial investment, but experience throughout the world has shown that it is not the case that the more complex or expensive a system, the more successful the elections will be. Some processes are more costly per voter than others, and vendors continue to promote some of the most expensive electoral processes and complicated technology to some of the poorest countries in the world. While the choice of electoral system and process is, of course, the sovereign right of Member States, the General Assembly in its resolution 64/155 obliges the Organization to bear in mind "sustainability and cost-effectiveness" in its work.

49. I remain concerned about electoral techniques and systems that are so complex or expensive that they have the potential to leave countries dependent on vendors or donors. Some technologies will have large cost implications not just at the moment they are implemented, but in the future, which should be thoroughly considered. In making choices about electoral technology, donors and recipients need to look carefully at national budget forecasts in order to aim squarely at the goal of nationally self-funded elections in future.

50. It is now accepted that electoral assistance should be made available whenever it is most needed and not just at the time of the election itself. For example, assistance is available for discussions on electoral reform which may be initiated years before an electoral event. The General Assembly recommended in its resolution 64/155, that the United Nations continue to provide technical advice and other assistance throughout the time span of the entire electoral cycle, including before and after elections, as appropriate. This "electoral-cycle approach" is also a useful planning tool for assistance providers and donors. But we should not confuse funding cycles with what a country wants or needs; nor should they be justifications for assistance that pays little attention to the end state.

VII. Observations

51. Demand from Member States for United Nations electoral assistance continues to be high. Given the increasing need for flexible and rapid response in electoral assistance, particularly in the light of current events, I encourage Member States to consider making further voluntary contributions for electoral assistance, including earmarked contributions for rapid response and for the inclusion of women, minorities and underrepresented groups, to the Trust Fund in Support of Political Affairs and the UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund, as well as to the United Nations Democracy Fund and the Fund for Gender Equality.

52. The continued demand for electoral assistance is an indication of the general appreciation of the work of the United Nations in supporting democratic development, including credible, periodic and genuine elections. This, I believe, is based largely on the commitment, as directed by the General Assembly, in its resolution 64/155, to carry out assistance in an objective, impartial, neutral and independent manner. United Nations assistance is also given with the understanding that there is no "one size fits all" model or solution, and that each country must be in charge of its own destiny, but the Organization is ready to make its expertise, best practices and lessons learned available.

53. The United Nations also upholds the importance of the implementation of international commitments, norms and principles with respect to elections, as well as the need for transparency, credibility, inclusiveness and universal suffrage. Various United Nations conventions protect the right of every citizen to take part in the conduct of public affairs and the right to vote and to be elected. Political inclusiveness, in particular women's political participation as well as that of minorities and other underrepresented groups, remains crucial for stable democracy, and is an important consideration in the assistance that the United Nations provides.

54. However, we must recognize that even the most inclusive, best-run elections cannot by themselves erase the risk of electoral violence. While elections are technical processes, they are fundamentally political events. To contain such risks, the United Nations must ensure that the support available to Member States includes not just technical advice but also mediation and good offices, if requested, preferably in collaboration with regional or subregional organizations. This approach would aim to address underlying grievances before elections, for example, by encouraging the design of political institutions to prevent the monopoly of power and political marginalization of the opposition and, after the election, to support dialogue and encourage statesmanship both in victory and in defeat. The true measure of an election is whether it engenders broad public confidence in the process and trust in the outcome. An election run honestly and transparently, respecting basic rights, with the effective and neutral support of State institutions and the responsible conduct of participants (leaders, candidates and voters) is most likely to achieve an accepted and peaceful outcome.

55. Sustainability and cost-effectiveness must increasingly be central considerations in the design and provision of electoral assistance, whether by the United Nations or other bodies. Building capacity that is permanent does not require permanent capacity-building. All assistance should have long-term sustainability and national ownership as its goals, and should aim at clearly defined end states. In addition, we must remember that more costly electoral machinery is not a panacea

for fraud. I continue to call upon Member States to consider carefully the cost of elections and of electoral assistance, in the light of other development needs. I encourage Member States and donors to consider the recommendation of the African Union Panel of the Wise that, for political and development reasons, States should establish as an important goal the funding of elections from national budgets, as soon as possible.

56. I will continue to prioritize efforts to improve the coherence, predictability and accountability in delivery of electoral assistance. Such efforts should be built upon the clear leadership role in all matters related to electoral assistance assigned by the General Assembly to the focal point.

57. At the same time, I will work to strengthen the ability of the Organization's various administrative processes to support its missions, UNDP and others in the United Nations Development Group in order to ensure that assistance programmes to Member States can be delivered with greater efficiency, predictability and accountability.

58. In support of this goal, United Nations electoral assistance should be provided in an integrated manner in all contexts, whether or not it is provided through a formally integrated field mission. I believe that this will greatly improve efficiency and promote coordination at the field level. I encourage Member States to take this into account when drafting Security Council electoral mandates and considering budgets and contributions to basket funds.

59. Coherence and efficiency can also be strengthened outside the Organization. While the multiplicity of electoral assistance providers and donors worldwide can ensure a broad range of useful advice for Member States seeking assistance, it can also create an unhelpful cacophony that has the potential to undermine preparations. I encourage Member States, when requesting assistance, to consider designating the United Nations (or another organization, if preferred) to help to ensure coherence among electoral assistance providers. I further urge that mandates for electoral assistance include a role for the United Nations in ensuring coherence among electoral assistance providers in any electoral assistance mandate given to a field mission.

60. Finally, we should be investing more time and resources in governance. Recently, one of my staff members was discussing an upcoming election with a young woman from a developing country. He said, "This country desperately needs a good election." The wise young woman replied, "No, what this country desperately needs is for those elected to govern well after their election." Investments in elections will not yield sustainable peace and development without good and effective governance at all levels, including independent and professional judiciaries, full respect for human rights, open and pluralistic media, a robust civil society and a credible and responsive Government.

Annex I

Selected examples of United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period

Afghanistan

1. Afghanistan held presidential and provincial elections in August 2009, followed by parliamentary elections in September 2010, with technical and logistical support from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow programme, managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), continues to support the Independent Election Commission and other electoral stakeholders. The United Nations also helped in the creation of an Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) and Media Commission. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (now UN-Women) supported dialogue between women members of parliament and the Independent Election Commission aimed at ensuring that women's concerns about the electoral process were heard and addressed adequately.

2. The 2009 and 2010 Presidential, Provincial Council and National Assembly elections were conducted by an all-Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) and complaints were investigated by ECC, which was composed of two United Nations-nominated commissioners and three Afghan commissioners. The 2009 and 2010 elections were conducted under more difficult and insecure conditions than the 2004-2005 polls. Extensive fraud was investigated by ECC, leading to the exclusion of approximately 1.5 million votes in 2009 and 1.3 million votes in 2010. Insecurity in some areas was also a complicating factor: many candidates had difficulties conducting their campaign in insurgency-prone areas; voter turnout was lower than in 2004-2005, and many candidates and voters felt disenfranchised owing to the insecurity. This led to the establishment of a controversial "special tribunal" attached to the Supreme Court to deal with electoral disenfranchisement and fraud issues. After considerable tensions, the Wolesi Jirga was inaugurated on 26 January 2011, with an agreement that the special tribunal would continue to investigate electoral crimes. The establishment of the special tribunal was considered illegal by legal experts and it was never recognized by IEC. The special tribunal's subsequent decision to remove 62 members from Parliament owing to "recount" results created a difficult impasse between the branches of Government. The tribunal was then dissolved by presidential decree in August. However, the highlight of the 2010 election was that IEC was able to take a proactive approach in detecting fraud while referring many suspected cases of electoral offences to ECC. In addition, IEC was able to take on more responsibility and therefore continue to build electoral capacity that will allow for better implementation of elections in the future.

Côte d'Ivoire

3. The United Nations provided technical, material, logistical and security support to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for the first and second round of presidential elections. The first round took place on 31 October 2010; a run-off was then necessary between the two top candidates after the first round, Alassane Ouattara and Laurent Gbagbo. Following the second round, held on

28 November 2010, IEC announced the provisional results on 2 December and declared candidate Ouattara as the winner of the run-off election, while the Constitutional Council proclaimed a version of results on 3 December that gave victory to Mr. Gbagbo. As requested by the Ivorian parties within the framework of the 2005 Pretoria Accord and mandated by the Security Council, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Côte d'Ivoire certified the second round of presidential elections, confirming the outcome as announced by the Electoral Commission. The results announced by IEC and certified by the United Nations were subsequently endorsed by the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the Security Council. Unfortunately, a violent crisis ensued as a result of Mr. Gbagbo's refusal to cede power. President Ouattara was inaugurated on 21 May, with the Secretary-General in attendance along with some 20 Heads of State.

Haiti

4. Preparations for elections in February 2010 were already under way when Haiti was struck by a devastating earthquake on 12 January 2010. In the light of the significant human loss and the considerable material damage, elections were postponed. Following a technical feasibility mission dispatched by the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance at the request of President Préval, a new electoral timetable was then adopted, with the first round of the elections set for 28 November 2010. The presidential elections were combined with the parliamentary elections (renewal of the lower chamber and one third of the upper chamber). The electoral process was further hampered by a cholera epidemic and a tropical storm.

5. Successful elections were held, overcoming doubts that they were possible given the complex and volatile political and socio-economic context and threats of boycott from some political groups. The first and second rounds of the presidential and legislative elections were held on 28 November 2010 and 20 March 2011. In line with its Security Council mandate, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) coordinated all international support to the electoral process, including assisting in the setting up of 1,500 registration centres for displaced voters, inspecting all 1,483 voting centres and identifying new locations to replace those that had been damaged or destroyed, distributing the updated voters' list and, in coordination with the Haitian National Police, developing and implementing an integrated electoral security plan. Resources deployed in support of the elections included more than 6,200 United Nations peacekeeping troops, 1,300 United Nations police, 200 civilian staff, 174 flight hours and 230 vehicles. A UNDP project focused on supporting the capacity of the provisional election commission as well as on complementary areas such as support to the tabulation centre, the voter list, electoral disputes and civic education.

Iraq

6. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has continued to provide technical advice and support to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) of Iraq. Along with its partner organizations, including UNDP, UNOPS and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNAMI has provided technical and policy advice, and worked to build the capacity of IHEC and its staff. With the support of its United Nations and other international partners,

IHEC overcame numerous operational, security and legal challenges and successfully conducted the national election for the Council of Representatives in March 2010. There was considerably broader participation at the local level than in the first parliamentary election in 2005. Voting was also conducted for eligible Iraqi voters in 16 other countries. Civil society participation was strong. Following a court order, IHEC recounted a significant amount of the cast ballots, a process that confirmed the accuracy of the earlier results. In total, IHEC has now prepared and conducted three major electoral events since the appointment of its Commissioners in 2007, including the governorate council elections (January 2009), presidential and parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan region (July 2009) and the national parliamentary elections.

Kyrgyzstan

7. Following the request of the Kyrgyz Interim Government in the aftermath of the April 2010 events, the United Nations responded by establishing the Kyrgyz Election Support Project executed by UNDP, focusing on technical operational preparations, the streamlining of the complaints process and women's participation. In addition, the United Nations deployed two international advisory members to the Kyrgyz Central Electoral Commission, with expertise in legal and procedural issues. Despite the fragile political situation and tight timelines, the June constitutional referendum and the 10 October parliamentary elections took place successfully and on time.

Liberia

8. Liberia will hold a referendum and presidential and legislative elections during the second half of 2011. For the second generation of elections since the end of the Liberian conflict, the United Nations will ensure that the primary responsibility for organizing the elections remain with the national authorities while providing them with needed support. The National Elections Commission receives technical assistance through the UNDP capacity-building programme for the 2010-2012 electoral cycle. Additionally, the National Elections Commission, UNDP and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) have identified less accessible areas where additional logistics support from UNMIL will be provided. In line with the mandate from the Security Council, UNMIL also supports the authorities in securing the elections while intensifying its work with the Liberian authorities on legal, political, judicial, security and human rights issues to mitigate tensions and create an atmosphere conducive to peaceful elections.

Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)

9. Upon the request of the Government of Papua New Guinea, the United Nations deployed an Electoral Expert Monitoring Team for Bougainville's second presidential and parliamentary elections in May 2010. That election — the winner of which would lead the region to the preparation process for the referendum on the status of Bougainville (envisaged between 2015-2020) — was a milestone in the consolidation of peace and democracy in the country. The election was, therefore, seen as critical, and there were also serious concerns about the possibility of the recurrence of violence. The Monitoring Team was able to visit polling stations all over the region including in some areas in the south where many people were voting for the first time. The United Nations presence was welcomed by all concerned

stakeholders and was widely seen as an important factor in building confidence in the electoral process and consequently contributing to the ultimately peaceful electoral environment.

Sudan

10. The United Nations provided technical advice and assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC), via the United Nations Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division, composed of the electoral division of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and UNDP. SSRC registered 3.9 million voters for the Southern Sudan Referendum between 15 November and 8 December 2010, for a referendum in January 2011 to determine if the people of Southern Sudan wished to secede from or remain a part of the Sudan. Between 9 and 15 January 2011, 3.9 million registered voters had the opportunity to cast their ballot. Over 250 United Nations staff worked to support SSRC down to the state and county levels. The United Nations, in cooperation with international partners, also provided financial and logistical support to the referendum process, including out-of-country voting in eight locations. United Nations air assets also transported materials by air to remote and isolated referendum centres. The results were accepted by all parties, with an overwhelming vote for secession.

11. In addition to the direct support provided by the United Nations Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division, in a letter to the Secretary-General dated 17 July 2010, the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement requested the United Nations to deploy a monitoring mission for the referendum. The Secretary-General appointed a panel to monitor and assess the referendums process. While standard practice is that the United Nations does not usually monitor electoral processes in which it also provides technical assistance, the role of the United Nations with respect to monitoring the referendums was deemed to be critical in enhancing confidence in the process and acceptance of results. Panel staff monitored the referendum in 46 counties in all states in Southern Sudan, focusing on remote areas; in 13 out of 15 states in northern Sudan; and in all eight countries where out-of-country voting took place. The panel reported to the Secretary-General that the outcome of the referendum reflected the free will of the people of Southern Sudan.

Tunisia

12. In response to the interim Government's request for electoral assistance, the United Nations deployed a high-level electoral needs assessment mission to Tunisia on 1 March 2011. The recommendations contained in the report of the Mission were approved by the focal point. Based on those recommendations, the United Nations has implemented a project assisting the Tunisian authorities in their organization of the Constituent Assembly elections envisaged for October 2011. The project has been defined to focus on areas where the United Nations has a clear comparative advantage and to ensure synergies and avoid duplication with other programmes being put in place by other actors. It includes measures to support the electoral management body and to help to promote inclusive participation in the electoral process on the part of women and civil society groups in particular.

Annex II

Countries and territories receiving United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period

Afghanistan[a]

Argentina

Bangladesh

Benin

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)

Burundi[a]

Burkina Faso

Cambodia

Cameroon

Central African Republic

Chad

Comoros

Congo

Côte d'Ivoire[a]

Democratic Republic of the Congo[a]

El Salvador

Ethiopia

Gambia

Guatemala

Guinea

Guinea-Bissau[a]

Guyana

Haiti[a]

Indonesia

Iraq[a]

Kenya

Kyrgyzstan

Lebanon

Lesotho

[a] Assistance being provided under a Security Council mandate.

Liberia[a]

Malawi

Maldives

Mexico

Mozambique

Nepal

Netherlands Antilles (Bonaire)

Niger

Nigeria

Occupied Palestinian Territory

Panama

Papua New Guinea

Peru

Republic of Moldova

Romania

Rwanda

Sierra Leone[a]

Solomon Islands

Sudan[a]

Suriname

Timor-Leste[a]

Togo

Tunisia

Turkmenistan

United Republic of Tanzania

Yemen

Zambia

Zimbabwe